United Nations A/C.3/61/SR.1

General Assembly
Sixty-first session

Official Records

Distr.: General
13 October 2006

Original: English

Third Committee

Summary record of the 1st meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 2 October 2006, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Al-Bayati ..... (Iraq)

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06-54645 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Statement by the Chairman

1. **The Chairman** emphasized the importance of the Committee's work, which included all aspects of sensitive human-rights issues. Those issues were of particular value for his country, Iraq, which had recently emerged from a difficult period of dictatorship during which grave violations of human rights had been committed and the Iraqi people deprived of their basic rights. He looked forward to open, transparent discussion by the Committee, based on teamwork, consultation and consensus.

Organization of work (A/61/250; A/C.3/61/1; A/C.3/61/L.1 and Corr.1 and Add.1/Rev.1)

2. **The Chairman** said that the allocation of agenda items to the Third Committee was contained in document A/C.3/61/1. He drew attention to chapter II of the report of the General Committee (A/61/250), which contained guidelines regarding the conduct of work, relating, among other things, to punctuality, length of statements and rights of reply, and adherence to deadlines imposed for the submission of draft resolutions and inclusion in the list of speakers. He emphasized three guidelines, relating to: (a) the number of resolutions and reports requested of the Secretary-General, (b) the length of resolutions, and (c) the need for delegations to allow sufficient time for estimates of expenditures to be prepared by the Secretariat and considered by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the Fifth Committee.

3. **Mr. Khane** (Secretary of the Committee), introducing documents A/C.3/61/L.1 and Corr.1 and Add.1/Rev.1, drew attention to a number of corrections to document A/C.3/61/L.1, all of which had been incorporated into the unofficial provisional programme of work distributed to delegations. In particular, he referred delegations to document A/C.3/61/1 for the correct numbering of agenda items. He reminded all delegations of the deadlines for inscription on the list of speakers and urged them to respect the guidelines for the submission of draft proposals, particularly guidelines relating to the use of existing resolutions and the 48-hour time limit. To facilitate and accelerate the co-sponsorship of draft resolutions an electronic co-sponsorship system had been designed, the operation of which would be explained subsequently. He read out the list of special rapporteurs and independent experts who wished to present their reports at the current session. He drew attention to new information regarding the status of documents, which would update document A/C.3/61/L.1/Add.1/Rev.1. In particular, a report by the Human Rights Council was expected to be issued as document A/61/53, in three parts. The first part would contain the proceedings of the first session of the Human Rights Council; the second, the proceedings of the first special session of the Human Rights Council (on the human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory); and the third, the proceedings of the second special session of the Human Rights Council (on the human rights situation in Lebanon).

4. **The Chairman** drew attention to the need to respect the proposed timetable of work as far as possible. It was particularly important for draft resolutions, which generally required lengthy negotiations, to be prepared by the principal sponsors as early as possible and for all deadlines to be scrupulously observed. Delegations initiating proposals were further requested to advise the Secretary of the Committee accordingly.

5. He said he took it that, in accordance with established practice, the Committee wished to approve the list of special rapporteurs and independent experts read out by the Secretary.

6. *It was so decided.*

7. **The Chairman** said he took it that the Committee wished to adopt the programme of work contained in document A/C.3/61/L.1, together with the provisions contained therein, as orally revised, and with the understanding that the programme of work would be adjusted if the situation warranted.

8. *It was so decided.*

Agenda item 60: Social development

(a) Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (A/61/99)

(b) Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family

(c) United Nations Literacy Decade: education for all (A/61/151)

(d) Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing (A/61/167)

9. **Mr. Ocampo** (Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs) said that the Committee bore a crucial responsibility for raising the profile of issues that mattered to ordinary people. The United Nations development agenda and the Millennium Development Goals set out a vision of sustainable development for all societies, rich and poor. To realize that vision fully, meaningful links needed to be forged between social and economic policies.

10. Income inequality within countries had become a global pandemic, undermining the achievement of the development goals set at the World Summit for Social Development. The "inclusiveness" of economic growth and globalization was not an automatic outcome of market forces and must therefore be ensured through explicit public choices. Social policies should not be viewed merely as a means of compensating for adverse social effects generated by economic systems. Rather, social-development goals should be integrated into economic policies.

11. There was now a consensus that macroeconomic instability was harmful for both growth and equity. The forging of links between the social and the economic required efforts to promote human development and social inclusion, supported by adequate fiscal resources. The allocation of such resources to social spending was a policy choice even for low-income countries. However, in those countries, consistent provision of official development assistance was also required.

12. Employment generation was the key link between the economic and the social. Regrettably, there was inadequate generation of quality employment in every region, even in developing countries experiencing rapid economic growth.

13. Labour forces needed to adapt to technical change and to business cycles. However, labour-market flexibility was not the only means of achieving that end. Training schemes needed to be established and procedures for social dialogue between employees and employers needed to be strengthened. Prudent minimum-wage policies should be implemented and adequate social protection provided.

14. The Ministerial Declaration adopted at the July 2006 session of the Economic and Social Council had identified steps aimed at further implementation of the 2005 World Summit commitment to promote full and productive employment and decent work for all. The Commission for Social Development would be carrying forward consideration of that issue.

15. Much attention had recently been focused on providing safety nets in economic crises. However, more attention needed to be paid to developing integrated economic and social policies aimed at preventing crises and establishing permanent social-protection systems. Safety nets might also be needed but should not be viewed as a substitute for basic social policies. New institutions were required in order to support the development of integrated policy frameworks within which the social effects of economic policies could be assessed.

16. Development at all levels should be participatory and inclusive. Indeed, social inclusion had been one of the main goals of the World Summit for Social Development. The recently concluded draft convention on the rights of persons with disabilities was a novel human-rights instrument with an explicit social-development dimension. Given the comprehensive and normative nature of the draft convention, the Committee might wish to revisit existing mandates in the field of disability.

17. The 2005 World Summit had highlighted the cross-cutting objective of mainstreaming gender issues in all policies and programmes, which was essential for the achievement not only of gender equality and the advancement of women but of all development goals. The Summit had also resolved to eliminate all forms of violence against women, which persisted around the world, despite progress made in addressing such violence as a violation of human rights. The Secretary-General's study on the subject (A/61/122 and Add.1) set out a blueprint for action to eliminate it and to close the gap between international standards and national laws, policies and practices. The recommendations in the study should receive the Committee's priority attention at the current session. The Committee might

also wish to take a leading role in encouraging relevant bodies to enhance their efforts in that regard and in promoting coordination and advocacy for the elimination of violence against women.

18. The recent adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples had been a landmark achievement. Nonetheless, indigenous peoples continued to experience extreme poverty and discrimination in many parts of the world. Recent efforts to address those problems included the integration of indigenous issues into the work of the United Nations system at the country level, through the United Nations Development Group.

19. The year 2007 would mark the fifth anniversary of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, which called for ageing to be integrated into development targets and agendas. Although some progress had been made towards that end, issues relating to older people remained a relatively low priority, and efforts in that regard should therefore be redoubled.

20. The worrying gaps in the implementation of various aspects of the United Nations development agenda required stronger institutions and more integrated policy frameworks at all levels. In that regard, the recommendations of the Secretary-General's High-level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence were eagerly awaited. It was to be hoped that both the Third Committee and the Second Committee would help to bring about a more coherent consideration of economic and social issues with a view to the effective implementation of development goals.

21. **Mr. Schölvinck** (Director, Division for Social Policy and Development) introduced the report of the Secretary-General on follow-up to the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (A/61/99). The report suggested that more should be done to address profound inequalities with a view to achieving sustained poverty reduction, economic growth and inclusive development. Measures to achieve growth should be balanced with measures to achieve economic and social equity.

22. There was a growing realization that development comprised broader goals. The 2005 World Summit outcome document had reaffirmed the vital role of major conferences in shaping a broad development vision. The Copenhagen Summit, in particular, had represented a significant shift in development thinking. It was recognized in the report that a consultative process was required to promote inclusion and empower poor people. Broad-based participation in poverty reduction was critical to improving governance and accountability.

23. The report of the Secretary-General on follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing (A/61/167) focused on national efforts to develop or strengthen national capacity on ageing and analysed the current status of international cooperation for the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing. Efforts to build such national capacity continued to receive insufficient political attention and financial support. The report suggested a number of measures for incorporating the challenges and opportunities of ageing into national policies and programmes. It was to be hoped that the recent trend away from ageing-specific activities and towards mainstreaming ageing into national development efforts would continue.

24. The recent conclusion of the draft convention on the rights of persons with disabilities was a historic breakthrough. Governments had, for the first time, sent a clear message that discrimination against persons with disabilities was unacceptable and had pledged to take practical steps to combat it.

25. The Secretary-General, in his opening address to the General Assembly, had highlighted what he saw as the three great challenges facing humanity: an unjust world economy, world disorder, and widespread contempt for human rights and the rule of law. Those problems could result in divisions that would threaten the very notion of an international community. The Committee had a crucial role to play in establishing social policies that would overcome such divisions.

26. **Ms. Bilello** (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)) said that the report of the Director-General of UNESCO on the implementation of the International Plan of Action for the United Nations Literacy Decade (A/61/151) provided a review of progress for the period 2005-2006 and showed that, while the global literacy challenge remained enormous, a number of important activities had been undertaken around the world.

27. The most significant new development at the global level had been the 2005 launch by UNESCO of the Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE), which was being implemented in 35 countries with particularly low literacy rates. Initial funding had been secured for activities that corresponded to the most urgent needs of the countries included in the first implementation phase.

28. Another important development had been the publication of the *Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2006: Literacy for Life*, which stressed the importance of literacy as a human right and a development imperative. The report stated, however, that literacy was still not receiving the attention it deserved. In that context, Mrs. Laura Bush, the First Lady of the United States of America, in her capacity as Honorary Ambassador for the United Nations Literacy Decade, had hosted the first-ever White House Conference on Global Literacy in New York in September 2006, in partnership with the United States Departments of State and Education, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and UNESCO. The Conference had been attended by a number of high-profile figures.

29. The Conference had underscored the need for global and national promotion of literacy and for public-private partnerships for investment in literacy programmes. It had also conveyed the message that literacy was the gateway to human and economic development and the basis for prosperity and peace. The link between literacy and issues such as health and poverty eradication had also been highlighted.

30. As a follow-up, UNESCO would be organizing a major international campaign in support of literacy within the framework of the United Nations Literacy Decade and LIFE, including a series of regional conferences which would lead to the establishment or reinforcement of country-level literacy programmes. The first such conference was due to be held in Qatar in March 2007.

31. **Mr. Saeed** (Sudan) said that the debt burden borne by developing countries made it extremely difficult for them to increase social investment. Such countries also faced problems with regard to access to international markets and the transfer of technology. He asked the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs whether, in his view, developed countries had lived up to their commitments regarding debt relief for poor countries.

32. With regard to the United Nations Literacy Decade, he asked whether statistics were available on literacy rates in developing countries. Such statistics would make it possible to measure progress. He welcomed the plan to hold regional conferences on literacy, which would help to address the specific challenges faced in each region.

33. **Mr. Jokinen** (Finland), referring to the report on the follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development, welcomed its emphasis on the need for broad-based participation in order to implement social-development policies. He wondered in what ways the United Nations could encourage such broad-based participation.

34. **Mr. Ramadan** (Lebanon) enquired whether the consistent provision of official development assistance (ODA) was a prerequisite for the effective integration of economic and social policies in middle-income as well as low-income countries.

35. **Mr. Amorós Núñez** (Cuba) asked the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs to assess the extent to which the developed countries had lived up to the specific promises they had made at the various United Nations conferences devoted to financing for development.

36. **Ms. Banzon-Abalos** (Philippines) requested further information about the thinking behind the suggestion that the General Assembly should revisit existing mandates in the field of disability. Although the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons and the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities were not legally binding, they served as valuable frameworks for the preparation and implementation of national legislation.

37. **Mr. Belinga-Eboutou** (Cameroon) wondered whether it would be possible to reach the targets set in the area of social and economic development by 2015. The hopes of millions of people were riding on the ability of the United Nations to meet those objectives. Failure to do so would have serious consequences for the credibility of the Organization.

38. **Mr. Ballestero** (Costa Rica) recalled that the Third Committee had always endeavoured to take a people-centred approach to development. However, the

reports currently before the Committee seemed to focus on the distinctions between high-, medium- and low-income countries rather than on the situation of individuals living in poverty. Since the vast majority of poor people lived in medium-income countries, he would like to know how the United Nations system planned to address their specific situation.

39. **Mr. Aksen** (Turkey), referring to document A/61/167, enquired about the current status of the "age-friendly cities guideline" and requested further information about the fieldwork envisaged in that connection.

40. **Mr. Suárez** (Colombia) inquired whether, in the context of the reforms, the Organization had taken any measures designed to ensure that international conferences dealing with economic and social development were followed up in an integrated and coordinated manner. As far as poverty eradication was concerned, he would be grateful for more detailed information on regional trends.

41. **Mr. Babadoudou** (Benin) recalled that, in his introductory statement, the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs had cautioned against dissociating social-development goals from economic policy. In that connection, he would like to know the extent to which those two areas could be integrated without first creating separate social policies.

42. **Mr. Ocampo** (Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs), responding to the questions posed, said that all the reports currently before the Committee contained assessments of the extent to which the developed countries were honouring the commitments they had made during the various international conferences. Since the 2003 Monterrey Conference on Financing for Developing, there had been a tangible increase in the volume of ODA and a widespread acceptance of the principles set out in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. However, not all developed countries were meeting the 0.7 per cent target and further efforts were needed to ensure that all ODA was channelled through the budgets of recipient countries. Without such assistance, many low-income countries would be unable to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

43. Debt-relief schemes, such as the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative and the new debt write-off programme, were proceeding well. Certain countries had concluded debt-relief agreements with the Paris Club but international assistance for countries with excessive private-sector debt was still inadequate.

44. The majority of the world's poor did indeed live in large middle-income countries such as China and Brazil. That issue had been discussed at both the 2005 World Summit and the meeting with the Bretton Woods institutions held in the spring of 2006 and, as a result, the Government of Spain would be hosting a conference on cooperation with middle-income countries in 2007. Many international institutions were providing a framework for dialogue in that area.

45. In response to the questions put by the representatives of Finland and Colombia, he said that the United Nations Development Group was responsible for managing the Organization's operational activities in the area of economic and social development. In that context, efforts were under way to ensure that all activities undertaken by United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies were viewed through the prism of the Millennium Development Goals. The 2005 World Summit had underlined the importance of an integrated follow-up to United Nations conferences and had recommended entrusting that responsibility to the Economic and Social Council. He looked forward to the adoption of a draft resolution on that issue.

46. Lastly, he acknowledged that the tendency to view economic policy as sacred had had an adverse effect on social policy. Accordingly, further attention must be devoted to the genuine integration of those two policy areas and, in particular, employment strategies should become a central element of monetary policy. In order to manage the new risks facing the world's population, a social-protection system should be created.

47. **Mr. Schölvinck** (Director, Division for Social Policy and Development), responding to the question put by the representative of the Philippines, said that the Secretariat was currently considering consolidating all the various reports on the issue of disability. Once the draft convention on the rights of persons with disabilities came into force, further thought would be given to the status of specific mandates. In response to the question put by the representative of Turkey, he said that the "age-friendly cities guideline" had been edited and printed. It was currently awaiting translation into all official languages of the United Nations but

would be issued to all delegations in English before the forthcoming session of the Commission for Social Development.

48. **Ms. Bilello** (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) said that she would provide the information requested by the representative of Sudan in due course.

49. **Mr. Amorós Núñez** (Cuba) asked whether UNESCO had taken any specific measures to eradicate illiteracy.

50. **Ms. Bilello** (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) said that the Executive Board of UNESCO was currently meeting and would be reviewing the overall methodology for its literacy activities. At the policy level, and given the complexities of the issue, UNESCO favoured a heterogeneous, rather than a uniform, approach.

51. **The Chairman** invited the Committee to begin its general discussion on item 60.

52. **Mr. Maqungo** (South Africa), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Group was deeply disappointed that the Commission for Social Development had not achieved a negotiated outcome on the review of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty. The Group hoped that the issue of poverty eradication could be addressed effectively during the current session of the General Assembly and looked forward to the adoption by consensus of the annual resolution on the follow-up to the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly.

53. Accelerating the achievement of the social-development goals required a comprehensive, integrated, coordinated and balanced approach that would ensure policy coordination at the global and national levels. It also required a multisectoral approach because there was both an economic and a social dimension to achieving sustainable development. An enabling environment was required for the achievement of social goals in areas related to poverty, hunger, education, literacy, health, infant mortality, gender equality and foreign occupation. An effective international enabling environment should encompass a reformed international financial and trade architecture, a comprehensive solution to the external-debt problem, an increase in market access for products from developing countries and an equitable multilateral trading system. The Group called on developed partners to be faithful to their commitments regarding ODA. Nevertheless, ODA could not be the main source of funding for social development; rather, international cooperation should be geared towards helping countries develop appropriate national social and development policies and overcome the legacies of the past.

54. The Programme of Action adopted at the World Summit for Social Development clearly stipulated that productive work and employment were central elements of development and essential for upholding human dignity. Full employment and decent work for all should be an integral part of enhancing economic growth and poverty-eradication strategies. The Group of 77 and China supported the continued focus, in both national and international development agendas, on social groups such as women, youth, older persons, the family, and persons with disabilities. Those issues and perspectives should be mainstreamed into poverty-reduction policies and social-development programmes.

55. The Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing was a model international framework which promoted the full participation of older persons in development and encouraged research on ageing in all countries. The Group welcomed the recent conclusion of the text of the draft convention on the rights of persons with disabilities. Since the majority of persons with disabilities lived in conditions of poverty, the Group also viewed the convention as a crucial tool to uplift the lives of a significant population among the poor and hence an instrument to eradicate poverty. Implementation of those international frameworks required political and financial commitment at the national level, as well as through international cooperation. Greater attention should be paid to national capacity-building and to raising the profile of social groups such as the aged and persons with disabilities.

56. Education was key to people-centred development. Addressing literacy challenges and achieving the goals of the International Plan of Action for the United Nations Literacy Decade required increased political and financial commitment by Member States and adoption of explicit literacy policies to expand quality primary and lower secondary education, as well as scaling up of youth and adult-

literacy programmes. Strengthening partnerships with all domestic and international stakeholders and increased financial and technical support by the international community was also needed.

57. **Mr. Jokinen** (Finland), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that the acceding countries Bulgaria and Romania; the candidate countries Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia; and, in addition, Iceland, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, aligned themselves with his statement.

58. The European Union strongly supported the implementation of the 2005 World Summit outcome document and General Assembly resolution 60/265, on the follow-up to the development outcome of the 2005 World Summit, adopted at the end of June 2006. Following the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development, a wide consensus had emerged globally on poverty eradication as the priority goal of development policies and cooperation. It would be a mistake to underestimate the value of the cooperation, coordination and harmonization in support of national poverty-reduction strategies that had become possible only as a result of the consensus reached in Copenhagen.

59. The European Union welcomed the review of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997-2006) as the priority theme of the forty-fourth session of the Commission for Social Development. Although the Millennium Development Goals included focused indicators for monitoring poverty, many countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, were not on track to reach those goals. It was important to empower people, especially women and girls, and to involve them in poverty-alleviation strategies.

60. The European Union also considered it important to promote productive employment and decent work for all. It aimed for a European aid, development and trade policy that would be coherent with the European social model. The European Consensus on Development Policy emphasized the will of the European Union to contribute to strengthening the social dimension of globalization, promoting employment and decent work for all, and making migration a positive factor for development. Employment was crucial to achieving social cohesion. The European Union promoted investments that generated employment and supported human-resources development. It also promoted decent work for all in line with the strategy outlined by the International Labour Organization (ILO). The European Consensus was the first document to commit the whole Union to that goal. The European Union encouraged dialogue and cooperation between ILO, the World Trade Organization and the Bretton Woods institutions aimed at promoting decent work for all.

61. Another important commitment in the Copenhagen Programme of Action was the promotion of social integration, a concept that was often used interchangeably with those of social inclusion and social cohesion. Liberalization, privatization and deregulation were important policy options in modern societies but active, competent governments and broadly participatory, democratic decision-making were a prerequisite for social integration. The commitment to fight poverty and inequality must cut across all economic, social and environmental policies. The success of economic policies must be judged not only in terms of GDP growth and inflation percentages, but also in terms of their employment impacts, social consequences and ecological footprints.

62. The European Union had adopted a comprehensive strategy to meet the challenges of sustainable development so as to improve the quality of life for present and future generations. That included reconciling economic growth and sound environmental management and promoting social equity and cohesion, economic prosperity and high-quality employment for its citizens. A balanced-growth strategy should ensure sustainable revenue for developing countries to address social issues and further support social inclusion and development.

63. For pro-poor growth policies to emerge, the poor needed to be informed and empowered to participate in poverty-reduction strategies and other policymaking processes. Those policies needed to create conditions for and remove barriers to the participation of the poor in growth, addressing the risks faced by poor people. Reliable social protection meant ensuring that people did not have to fall back on coping strategies that could lead to chronic poverty and loss of human capital. Social-protection systems should be extended to strengthen social inclusion. The State needed to provide the opportunity for structured public-private

dialogue at various levels, including with employers' and workers' representatives and broader civil society. The European Consensus on Development Policy emphasized that combating poverty would be successful only if equal importance was given to investing in people, protecting natural resources, securing rural livelihoods and investing in wealth creation.

64. Economic processes had become global, and economic-policy choices in one country could have huge social impacts in others. While the "rules of the game" of the economy had rapidly globalized, the world community had yet to create effective global social policies to regulate economic globalization so that its benefits would be broadly shared and maximized. The social dimensions of globalization tended to remain within the governance mandate, under the responsibility of the national public sector. The economic benefits of effective social policies were no longer questioned by Governments of most European Union member countries. That understanding should facilitate social investment in the range necessary for the sustainable reduction of poverty in Europe and elsewhere.

65. In developing countries, the economic imperatives of globalization were strongly voiced through and by the ministries for finance, empowered increasingly by the budget support provided by some donors. The global social standards and strategies endorsed in the United Nations did not play a strong role in national policymaking in developing countries. The ministries responsible for social protection and other aspects of social policy needed to benefit more from strategic partnerships and capacity-building programmes so as to have a stronger voice in constructive national policymaking.

66. The European Union welcomed the work of the Commission for Social Development on the implementation and follow-up of the Copenhagen Summit. It appreciated the progress made towards reforming the methods of work of the Commission and looked forward to streamlining the Commission's work and agenda. The European Union also looked forward with great interest to the discussions to be held at the February 2007 session on the theme of promoting full employment and decent work for all.

67. **Ms. Okagaki** (Japan) said that Japan supported the implementation of the commitments made at the World Summit for Social Development and during the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly. It welcomed the review of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty at the forty-fourth session of the Commission for Social Development. Japan reiterated its strong support for achieving those commitments based on the people-centred approach of human security. Her Government had promoted human security as an important perspective of its foreign policy and its ODA. To date, the Japanese Government had contributed about $280 million to the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security, established through its initiative in 1999.

68. Her Government welcomed the agreement reached at the eighth session of the Ad Hoc Committee on Disability on a draft convention to protect the rights of persons with disabilities. The continued participation of civil society, including persons with disabilities, in the negotiations had set a good example of cooperation between Member States and civil society. Her delegation hoped that the convention would be adopted at the current session of the General Assembly.

69. Noting that 2007 would be the fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Political Declaration and the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, she pointed out that Japan's population was ageing with unprecedented speed. Japan continued to implement policies and programmes on ageing within a broad framework provided by the Madrid Plan of Action with a view to creating a society for all ages and was ready to share its experiences and expertise with the international community.

70. Japan was committed to achieving the goals of the United Nations Literacy Decade through international cooperation in the field of formal and non-formal education. It had been providing a unique international cooperation programme, the World Terakoya Movement, which had been initiated in 1989 by the National Federation of UNESCO Associations in Japan. Her Government reaffirmed its commitment to contribute to the field of literacy in collaboration with the international community.

71. **Ms. Rüegg** (Switzerland), speaking as the youth representative, said that access to employment was a key aspect of social integration, yet nearly half of the unemployed throughout the world were young people.

At the individual level, young people without work lost their self-confidence and ran the risk of becoming socially isolated. At the collective level, unemployment generated high economic costs and exacerbated inequalities, while youth unemployment even affected social cohesion, security and peace. Young unemployed people became despondent and could be tempted by extremism. She called on Governments of all countries, together with the private sector and civil society, to give priority to policies targeting young people.

72. The level of youth unemployment in Switzerland, while relatively low by international standards, needed to be resolved. Greater attention must be given to the needs of young people with a migrant background. The fact that many of Switzerland's youth were on the whole well-off encouraged them to participate in the struggle for more solidarity, not only between generations but also between countries. The world could not afford a situation where young people, who made up half the population, were mere bystanders. Young people were not just a social group but a key partner in the elimination of poverty, the management of migration, the promotion of human rights and the maintenance of peace and security. The youth perspective should be integrated into all aspects of the work of the United Nations.

73. Although several countries had responded to repeated calls to include representatives of young people in their delegations to the General Assembly and to other permanent meetings of the United Nations, at the current session of the General Assembly less than 10 per cent of Member States had included youth representatives in their delegations. It was not enough to ask young people to express their views once every 10 years. Young people wished to participate now and they asked for the trust and support of the international community so that they could become real partners in decision-making.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.